

REMARKS

This paper responds to the Office Action mailed on December 14, 2006.

Claims 4 and 5 are amended, claims 1-3, 9-11, and 15-17 are canceled, and claims 21 and 22 are added; as a result, claims 4-8, 12-14, and 18-22 are now pending in this application.

§102 Rejection of the Claims

Claims 1, 9, and 15 were rejected under 35 USC § 102(e) as being anticipated by Cretti et al. (U.S. 6,326,827).

Applicant respectfully traverses. Applicant submits that Cretti et al. is not prior art with respect to claims 1, 9, and 15. However, to expedite prosecution, Applicant cancels claims 1, 9, and 15 without disclaimer or prejudice. Applicant reserves the right to reintroduce claims 1, 9, and 15 in a subsequent patent application claiming the benefit of priority of the present patent application.

§103 Rejection of the Claims

Claims 2, 3, 10, 11, 16, and 17 were rejected under 35 USC § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Cretti et al. (U.S. 6,326,827) in view of Kono et al. (U.S. 6,489,819).

Applicant respectfully traverses. Applicant submits that Cretti et al. and Kono et al. are not prior art with respect to claims 2, 3, 10, 11, 16, and 17. However, to expedite prosecution, Applicant cancels claims 2, 3, 10, 11, 16, and 17 without disclaimer or prejudice. Applicant reserves the right to reintroduce claims 2, 3, 10, 11, 16, and 17 in a subsequent patent application claiming the benefit of priority of the present patent application.

Allowable Subject Matter

Claims 4 and 5 were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but were indicated to be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Claims 4 and 5 are rewritten in independent form as suggested by the Office Action. The rewriting does not alter the scope of claims 4 and 5. Thus, claims 4 and 5 are now in condition for allowance.

Claims 6-8, 12-14, and 18-20 were allowed. Applicant acknowledges the allowance of claims 6-8, 12-14, and 18-20.

Conclusion

Applicant respectfully submits that the claims are in condition for allowance and notification to that effect is earnestly requested. The Examiner is invited to telephone Applicant's attorney ((612) 373-6969) to facilitate prosecution of this application.

If necessary, please charge any additional fees or credit overpayment to Deposit Account No. 19-0743.

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CERTIFICATE UNDER 37 CFR 1.8: The undersigned hereby certifies that this correspondence is being filed using the USPTO's electronic filing system EFS-Web, and is addressed to: MS Amendment, Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450 on this 14th day of March 2007.

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Signature 